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Note #70

Capetown Report by Shirley McNaughton

To: BCI Executive Committee
 From: Shirley McNaughton
 Date: Sept 23, 1999
 Subject: Capetown Meeting, Sept 6 - 17, 1999

Those attending the meeting: 14 participants
 Britt Amberntson, Margareta Jennische, Kirsten Lorstrom, from Sweden
 Astri Holgersen and Laila Johansen, from Norway
 Judy Wine and Ilana Gorfil from Israel
 Pina Gennaro from Italy
 Els Koerselman from The Netherlands
 Trish Bailey and Gillian Nelms from England
 Annalu Waller from Scotland
 Jane Green and myself from Canada

First, a short summary of the two weeks!

We began arriving on Saturday, Sept. 5. A small group gathered that evening for dinner at the Wallers. On the Sunday, the remainder of the participants (except for Pina Gennaro) arrived. We visited a beautiful beach and then we returned to the Wallers' home where we had a "brie" (barbeque), with all the Interface committee members (Faizah Joefty, chairperson; Linda Joosten, staff member; Lynn Hakimi, parent; Brenda Allen; Diane Hocter; Luann Waller, treasurer) attending. Most enjoyable!

Monday morning, Sept 6, we began the meeting.

Symbol development work was focussed on throughout the two weeks, with many breaks for visits in and around Capetown. The topics I requested to be added to the agenda — governance, ISO, Doug Crockford, and ISAAC 2000 presentations were allotted time during lunch, two evenings and the last afternoon. The sight-seeing included a visit to Robben Island where Mandela was imprisoned, Cape Point, Table Mountain, wine country, a rehabilitation centre or school (we were divided into small groups of 3-4, each group going to a different location), Waterfront shops and Cavendish shops. During the second week, an afternoon was devoted to presentations relating to Bliss usage, for teachers and speech pathologists in the Capetown area. Els Koerselman, Judy Wine, Gillian Nelms and Britt Amberntsen presented on this day and all our Bliss group attended and joined in the discussion. We discovered that among us, we had 315 years of experience in working with Bliss! The following day, we all attended the Interface Annual General Meeting, where I had been asked to speak for an hour on language development. Both the presentation days were very well received. Blissymbolics has not been as widely used in recent years in South Africa, and our talks seemed to revive the interest in Bliss. Just three months ago, Gail VanTantenhove, from Prentke Romich Co. had visited and promoted Minspeak and the PRC technology. Our focus was on interaction, language development and what to do when you do NOT have technology. We were very well received.

We finished the meeting with a wonderful party at Annalu's uncle's estate near Capetown. It was a very impressive home, and we were treated royally. The evening finished with a singsong, dance-along, with me playing the piano and Chris Waller (Annalu's father) leading the singing. It was a wonderful finale to our meeting!

My most memorable events were the visit to Robben Island, where an ex-inmate was our guide (He



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never stopped talking and demonstrating "reconciliation".) and visiting a school for "differently abled children" in the township of Guguletu. The children all spoke Xhosa but the older and more advanced children also spoke English. All the staff were black, except for our guide, Corneli Strydan, who was a speech-language pathologist, and one physio-therapist. It was a warm and supportive learning environment!

I have undertaken to send Bliss teaching materials, Communicating Together, and any AAC textbooks that we have duplicates of to the volunteer librarian, Virginia Kasana (known affectionately by the staff and children as Mama Gadi) in the Township School I visited — Tembaletu, PO Box 2228, Clareinch 7740, South Africa.

And of course, the scenery in South Africa was breath-taking! We never stopped taking pictures of the many wonderful sights. The contrast was immense, with outstanding beauty and affluence throughout many parts of the city — and with the Township dwellings stretched along the highways, showing the harshest of living situations. Some of our group members were able to visit another township and shared their experience when they returned. There is an immense need for help! One service organization working with children with severe disabilities and not attending school, that we were introduced to by Judy Wine, was started by a speech-language pathologist, Helen Lieberman — Imibala, PO box 4490. CapeTown, fax 021461-6823. Very worthy of help!

Symbol Development

By Margareta's calculation, 735 new symbols were approved by the Panel and are ready for presentation to the System Committee, once the manuscript is completed upon their return to Sweden. There is need to determine the System Committee membership and begin to make arrangements for a meeting in Canada late this fall, to be attended by the Swedish Co-ordinating Group. It was suggested at this meeting that the membership be Jinny Storr, Barbara Kates (from the previous committee, to provide continuity), and Ami Shalit (if he is able to come to Canada at his own expense). Judy Wine will be contacting Ami upon her return to Israel and will let us know if he could undertake this role. Ami had experience with Blissymbols when he developed his software of HyperBliss. It was felt by the group that he is removed from the application of Bliss, but knowledgeable in the system, and thus a good third member of the System Committee. As soon as we hear from Judy as to Ami's possible travel plans, BCI Toronto needs to contact Jinny and Barb Kates to be able to offer some dates to the Swedish Coordinating Committee.

Annalu Waller worked throughout the two weeks on a revised form of the Fundamental Rules and Principles. It includes many recommendations made by Michael Everson, that will make the rules more compatible with the ISO requirements and as well, the feedback from the group. I helped in editing and refining this paper. When the final proposed form is sent by Annalu to BCI, I believe it will be a valuable upgrade to our present Rules. It will need to be distributed to all Board members and presented to the Board for approval. Interesting new terminology (with my proposed accompanying symbols) was arrived at and the terminology was agreed upon by all present. I will be formally proposing the symbols to the Symbol Coordinating Committee. We used the terms Bliss-character and Bliss-word throughout the two weeks, and referred to the Bliss language rather than system.

The symbol categories that we worked on and completed were:

- sports — ball, horse, water and boat, fight, mountain, vehicle, table, winter
- food, kitchen tools, spoons, cups, sweets,
- hats
- culture
- scientists and science
- artists and people in stories
- doctors and therapists
- assistants
- craftsmen and workmen
- people
- work related symbols
- geographical symbols
- Nordic gods

Partially finished were:

- religion

grammatical indicators

A beginning made to arriving at vocabulary and initial symbols:
technology
education

University of Dundee Proposal

Annalu reported on the Dundee project for which she would be the principle investigator. It comprises a three-year project costing £258,92 with staffing of a full time software engineer, a part-time linguist and a part-time research clinician. There are several areas involved in the project — the development of a truetype font to include a floating pointer capability; a database dictionary; software for a spoken language text processor using word prediction rather than linguistic analysis. Advisors to the project, named in the proposal are Ena Davies, Gillian Nelms and Shirley McNaughton. Bliss-UK monitors would check all the symbols. These would be Trish Bailey and Alison MacDonald.

The proposal has been submitted and the first response from the adjudicators has been questions related to a wider dissemination of the results. This has been taken as a good sign, as the method and objective of the proposal were not questioned.

ISO

An evening was devoted to explaining the ISO and Michael Everson's role in this. All the participants were requested to join their national ISO Committees. They will do so as soon as they receive procedural information from Annalu and myself.

Douglas Crockford

The videotape made of Doug Crockford's presentation in Toronto was shown, and the list of symbols for which he is giving a new meaning was read.

oil — waterway
rain — waterfall
parent — sibling
father — brother
mother — sister
pain — disgust
bath — canteen, reservoir
comb — odometer
own — crossing
give — gift
get — keep
big — adult
do, activity — biped
destroy — incline
visit — reception, check-in
idea — confusion
worry — problem
interesting — idea
correct — very interested
understand — learn
forget — teach
multiply — destroy
good, like — really like, love
bad — hate
want — passion
solid — unstable

I also quoted Douglas Everingham's comment regarding my expressing concern re the above.
"Have seen Shirley's response and think it must be taken seriously even to the point of a detailed re-examination of serious clashes, e.g., parent: sibling symbols."

The group shared my concern and together we drafted a reply for Doug Crockford, which I offered to show to them for comments before sending. The main message is that "The entire group working on symbols in Capetown wish to maintain the integrity of Blissymbolics for all Bliss users around the

world. They do not want to see the further development of Blissymbolics undermine the present usage of the system. They are willing to enter into discussion with Douglas Crockford toward avoiding a split within the Bliss-using community. They have concern that the changes to symbols that Douglas Crockford is proposing will produce two Blissymbol communities, and could in the future exclude those Bliss users who use Blissymbolics as an AAC system. They do not want AAC Bliss users to be outside the Bliss-using community of the future."

Governance

This topic was discussed with the entire group on one evening, and from this, those who were interested formed an ad hoc group that met two lunch times, to develop a proposal for the Governance Committee. The topics presented for discussion were as follows. They were devised from discussion with Peg Aylesworth and Nancy Christie (Executive Director of ISAAC)

1. What should be done at each level — local and international?
2. Responsibilities of local level re funding of international?
3. Election of international board members?
4. Copyright, how to pursue any encroachment?
5. Symbol Development policy
6. Budget of international body — should it include travel for officers?
7. Committee structure

The discussion tended to focus more around things that were not working currently than in too much constructive discussion re the above areas. There was much concern expressed re poor and slow communication with BCI. I explained our limited resources and our totally volunteer organization, but there were still many comments about lack of responses and limited information being available to them. e.g., re copyright/royalty arrangements (Els, Judy, and Astri), and arrangements for the Capetown meeting, e.g., no-one knew who should have notified Erna Alant of the change in venue. We also discovered that when the Swedes took on symbol development, they had one perception of their role and we had another. They did not feel they could take any initiative regarding the Panel members, thinking that new members and/or updating of the Panel membership was a BCI responsibility. They felt, quite rightly, that the list of members was very out of date, but did not feel it was within their role to do anything about it. We need to clarify this situation, as well as the arrangement responsibility for the System Committee, for the period up to August, 2000.

During the evening discussion, Annalu posed the question, "Is there any future for BCI?" This brought, as she hoped, a strong supportive response for BCI to continue!

Those attending the follow-up luncheon meetings were Astri Holgersen, Gillian Nelms on behalf of Ena Davies, Els Koerselman on behalf of Anemie Van roy, Judy Wine at her request, Annalu Waller with interest. I chaired the meetings. All of those attending agreed to remain part of the committee, along with those already on the committee — Peg Aylesworth (co-chair), Shirley McNaughton (co-chair), Alan Sunisloe, Ena Davies, Anemie Van roy, Lee Mehrlich, Joe Lemire (adviser).

Out of all the discussions, the following proposal was developed for the consideration of the Governance Committee and BCI Exec (I will be sending it to Peg Aylesworth and then preparing it for a formal proposal to the BCI Board. The present information is at the formative stage):

1. The international level should consist of "a governing body to co-ordinate international activities and support interaction between national/regional/language groups". Proposed size of governing committee of 3-5 persons from different local groups.
2. The initial proposed name change for the international organization was Blissymbolics Communication International Coalition (BCIC). A later thought was that possibly the Co-alition might be changed to Consortium. The slight change in the acronym, however, was seen as a way to acknowledge the new organizational structure. Further discussion is needed regarding the connotation of each term. Coalition can be viewed as a temporary political alliance. Consortium can be viewed as a business enterprise. The image that the group wished to portray was that there was a coalition of national/regional/language Bliss groups.
3. "Local level" should be determined according to national, regional or language factors.
4. Every local group should be a legal entity according to the laws of its region.
5. There would be no formal permanent committee structure. Rather ad hoc committees would be formed by the governing committee as needs arose, e.g., affiliate meeting, copyright problem, technology coordination problem, system development problem.
6. Rather than attempting to have any permanent international committees, the national, regional or language groups would each take responsibility for an area within the BCIC mandate. The proposed

length of time for this responsibility was 5 years. The areas identified and potential national, regional or language group to take responsibility were as follows:

1. System Development - Sweden
2. Database management and helping national groups access symbols for their dictionaries - Scotland
3. Copyright or BCIC approval for publishing or using symbols - (no immediate suggestion, but recognition that this could be outside Canada)
4. Website management that would include international coordination, interaction between national groups, public relations, providing information re current usage and professionals worldwide - Canada
5. Coordination of biennial national group meetings - (no immediate suggestion, although if the Washington meeting arrangement works out, we could consider England)
6. Product distribution and marketing - coordinating information re this worldwide - Israel
7. Supporting usage internationally through coordination of resources and knowledge - The Netherlands
8. Resource to national groups - (this might be included in #4 above or could be delegated to another national group)
9. Technology monitoring and encouraging and coordinating - UK
10. Training standards (no suggestion)
11. Legal matters - Canada

Regarding symbol development:

International Panel members would be nominated by member country executive and formally invited by the Symbol Panel Coordinating Group (Sweden).

"Cottage industry" concept to be encouraged with small groups in various countries working on particular symbol groups.

Ad hoc committee be established when changes in symbol development policy and procedures were needed. (e.g., If member of Symbol Committee had to resign).

To gain more panel members (It is felt that the actual number is much smaller than is currently on the list given to Swedish Committee by Katherine Seybold, and that the Panel needs to be enlarged), it was suggested that there be a call for Panel members in the ISAAC Bulletin, Communicating Together, and BCI Website.

ISAAC 2000 in Washington

On the last afternoon we discussed presentations to be submitted to ISAAC. The first author named below will undertake to submit the abstract, due by October 15, 1999.

1. A miniseminar presenting our new way of viewing Bliss, as a language, and using language terminology. Annalu will be the first author, and joining her in the presentation will be Gillian Nelms, Shirley McNaughton, Els Koerselman and Margareta Jennische.

(Some thoughts that emerged in Capetown - "Bliss in the 21st Century", "Bliss, Coming out of the closet as a language!" We now use the terms, Bliss characters, Bliss words and Bliss sentences, Bliss prefixes and suffixes.)

2. Poster Session re Bliss Technology — Gillian Nelms

3. Poster session re new structure for BCI, 2000 — Shirley McNaughton, Peg Aylesworth

4. Poster Session re Bliss Usage Around the World — Ilana Gorfil, Judy Wine

5. Poster Session re "the growing of a language" or "the power of a living language" — Britt Amberntson, Margareta Jennische, Kerstin Lorstrom

6. Poster Session re Bliss Pen Pals in Israel (Arab child) and South Africa (Bantu child) — Ilana Gorfil, Corneli Strydan

7. Platform presentation re Bliss usage in Norway — Astri Holgersen, Laila Johansen, Kari Brekke

8. I will approach Ellen Forrest re a poster session about her "Fighting for Bliss in Canada" for her daughter, Kate.

9. I will contact Julie and Cal Millar re them working with the Bloorview-MacMillan team re a case study poster re Samantha.

10. I will approach Liz Baird re a submission re her research. Els Koerselman would be interested in working with Liz, to involve Bliss users in the Netherlands in using BlissInternet.

Great idea! Els had the idea of making signs in Bliss that say "Please speak more slowly", to be sold at ISAAC for persons who use English as their second language to be able to hold up as reminders to speakers who speak too quickly! Hope she follows through on this!

We need to ensure that Bliss has an exhibit at the conference. It will be an excellent opportunity to display Bliss products, software, and inform everyone of the new governance.

The group felt that a "debate" presentation regarding the differences between Blissymbols and Minspeak, between Bruce Baker and at least one Minspeak colleague, and myself and Margareta Jennische would be a very useful presentation. I will explore this, first with Bruce, then with Jeff Higginbotham, who suggested this many years ago. ADDITION, NOV. 3. IN CONTACTING JEFF HIGGINBOTHAM, JEFF FELT THERE SHOULD BE SEVERAL OTHER AMERICANS INVOLVED IN THE DISCUSSION AND SINCE THERE WAS ONLY TEN DAYS BEFORE THE SUBMISSION HAD TO BE COMPLETED, I DECIDED IT WAS NOT FEASIBLE TO PULL THIS PRESENTATION TOGETHER. IT WILL HAVE TO WAIT FOR ANOTHER TIME!

Bliss Affiliate Meeting in Washington

It was the wish of the group meeting in Capetown that the Affiliate meeting be held prior to the Conference and prior to the Short Courses and Board Meeting. The general consensus was that a two-day meeting on the Saturday and Sunday preceding the conference would be best, with the first day devoted to the System and chaired by Margareta Jennische, and the second day devoted to reports from Board members and affiliates and Governance. The weekend meeting would allow a day for sight-seeing prior to the Short Courses starting.

Trish Bailey agreed to chair a committee to handle the invitations and registration. I said that BCI, Canada would be in the best position to look after finding a location and making the venue arrangements. We need to discuss this with Katherine Seybold.

I will inform Barb Rush regarding the dates for the Bliss Bus to travel, once dates for the Affiliate meeting are confirmed. Britt Amberntson is interested in knowing the bus arrangements, as she plans to be in Toronto prior to the ISAAC Conference. We need to let all affiliates know of the Bliss Bus, as this may suit others as a mode of transportation. The dates of the Affiliate Meeting needs to be an item for the next Board Meeting.

Publications

Kleine Tibo

Els Koerselman brought a copy of this children's book for BCI. She followed the BCI procedures as she interpreted them and ensured that copyright information was included in the Dutch version. She received a fee for monitoring the symbols that assisted her in attending the Capetown meeting. She did not realize that any royalty to BCI was needed, and has requested that specific information as to the amount of the royalty fee be made known to Affiliates so this can be negotiated at the same time as the monitoring fee. She was unaware that there had been no previous contact with BCI re the earlier German version. She understands that they will be printing the book in other languages in the future and recommends that BCI contact the publishers. She believes Katherine Seybold has the contact information. The address of the publisher is in the back of the book along with the copyright statement. Excellent children's book.

Spot in Bliss

Bliss-UK still have many copies of this publication. I recommend that we approach them proposing a consignment arrangement and try to sell them in North America, both independently and through Bridges . It is an excellent book to be made easily available here.

Who has read this note?

